

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ news release

Most 343-5634

## INTERIOR REPORTS PROGRESS IN WETLANDS PRESERVATION

Of the "new" acreage, 42,000 acres were added to the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. This included land for five new refuges and additions to 34 existing areas. The remaining 180,000 acres were added to the Waterfowl Production Areas in the northern prairie States.

The purchase of land and easements for waterfowl habitat is financed through the sale of of Migratory Bird Hunting Stamps (commonly called "duck stamps") to waterfowl hunters, conservationists, and philatelists.

Except for costs of printing, money from the stamps is earmarked for purchase of waterfowl habitat. Because annual sales were not enough to save key areas, Congress in 1961 authorized a \$105 million "loan" fund to purchase waterfowl habitat over a seven-year period, with the amount to be repaid from the sale of duck stamps.

At the outset of the program, the Department set a goal of 2,500,000 acres to be acquired--1,750,000 of them for Waterfowl Production Areas, mostly in Minnesota and North and South Dakota, to protect nesting habitat from drainage. Much of the habitat is protected by purchase of permanent easements--agreements not to drain marshes.

As of June 30, 742,000 acres had been acquired under the accelerated program. A total of \$32.5 million had been appropriated to the loan fund. With the \$105 million goal unlikely to be attained in the next two years, proposed legislation has been introduced to extend the program.

8 4 5 8 1